

Testimony Provided for AB-302
Assembly Rural Economic Development Public Hearing
10 a.m., May 30, 2007

Good Morning,

I am Peter Biermeier, Acting Bureau Director with the Wisconsin State Park System and with me is Jim Warren, Section Chief with the Division of Forestry, both within the Department of Natural Resources.

We are here to testify in opposition to Assembly bill, AB-302.

The bill provides for golf cart use within certain areas of Governor Thompson State Park and within certain areas of the Peshtigo River State Forest. Under this bill, the Department would be asked to promulgate rules to determine when and where golf cart usage would be allowed.

Golf carts are not currently allowed on any other state parks or state forests roads in Wisconsin. Golf carts are not designed and manufactured for on-road use, and because they lack equipment and certification needed to comply with federal motor vehicle safety standards, golf carts cannot be registered for use on public roads in Wisconsin. This is why golf carts are not allowed on the town roads in Peshtigo River State Forests or on the town roads leading to the entrance to Governor Thompson State Park.

We continue to be greatly concerned about mixing vehicles without proper signaling or safety equipment onto roadways designed for cars and trucks. Allowing golf carts on narrow winding roads, near beaches where children are playing, or in parking areas where boats are being launched or loaded increases the potential for accidents and injuries. And a golf cart does not offer much protection in the event of a collision with an automobile or truck. We are expecting that the traffic to High Falls Flowage and Cauldron Falls Flowage will greatly increase as these properties are recognized and developed, as will the traffic on the neighboring town roads.

While AB 302 provides for access for golf cart usage within the state park and state forest, it does not create an exemption to s. 341.04(1) which states golf carts are not permitted on public roadways. This means that even with a new law in effect allowing for use at the state park and forest, golf cart use would still be prohibited on roads leading to the entrance of Governor Thompson State Park and along the town road in the Peshtigo River State Forest leading to boat landing number six.

We believe that golf carts would meet the state park definition of a "vehicle", meaning any use of a golf cart on roads within Governor Thompson State Park would require a current vehicle admission sticker. In addition, if golf carts are trailered to the park to avoid illegal use on neighboring town roads, two vehicle stickers would be required.

We oppose this bill for the reasons outlined and for its precedent setting ability. State Parks and State Forests have for years been safe habitats for families and silent sports users and we hope you will recognize that fact in your deliberations.

Finally, the State of Wisconsin recently passed a law (s. 349.26) that allows the operation of neighborhood electric vehicles on local roads with certain restrictions. NEVS vehicles are basically golf carts with necessary safety and signaling equipment added. We invite you to consider the application of that bill in lieu of AB 302 during your review of this situation.

Thank you and we are now available for any questions you may have.

Peter Biermeier

Jim Warren

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources